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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000202

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DEPARTMENT PASS USTR FOR AGAMA
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [EINV](#) [ECON](#) [MARR](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: AF DAS MOSS'S MEETING WITH SGF KINGIBE

REF: A. A) ABUJA 142
[1](#)B. B) ABUJA 152

Classified By: Ambassador Robin R. Sanders for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Ambassador and AF DAS Moss met with Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) Kingibe

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January 23, and discussed the situation in the Niger Delta, the recent sidelining of Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Chair Ribadu, and the court case against Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. On the Delta, Kingibe said the GON had just launched a new initiative aimed at addressing the past grievances of local people, particularly the Ijaw in Bayelsa and Delta states, but also at confronting what he considered "criminality," particularly in Rivers State. He acknowledged that the GON had been sometimes "hesitant" to accept previous offers of security assistance from the USG because it did not want to internationalize what it believed should remain an internal matter. He acknowledged that the sidelining of Ribadu had been badly handled, but insisted that this should not be read as any decrease in President Yar'Adua's commitment to fighting corruption. On Pfizer, Kingibe urged us to treat the Attorney General as our main point of contact, but acknowledged that the Kano State Government was also part of the equation. The conversation also briefly touched on Nigerian peacekeepers in Somalia, the bid of a U.S. company to rebuild parts of Nigeria's rail network, and the conclusion of a Bilateral Investment Treaty. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) On January 23, visiting AF DAS Todd Moss, accompanied by the Ambassador, EconCouns and PolCouns (notetaker) met with SGF (the position is roughly equivalent to the White House Chief of Staff) Babagana Kingibe. SGF's Political Advisor Abubakar Muhammed was also present.

Expanding the Bilateral Relationship

[1](#)3. (C) DAS Moss noted that President Yar'Adua's recent U.S. visit was widely considered a success, and had increased our expectation for improved cooperation with the GON as well as raised the bar for Nigeria to improve its democracy. Kingibe said Yar'Adua was also satisfied with the visit, and acknowledged that it was the GON's responsibility to fulfill those expectations and maintain the momentum in the

relationship. He promised to keep pushing ahead.

¶4. (C) Kingibe said he had a growing respect for the President, whom he described as deliberative and steady, and "a man who says what he means and means what he says." This was a major shift from the more Machiavellian ways of former President Obasanjo, and had taken some getting used to. Kingibe added that this was a "make or break time" for the Yar'Adua administration, and that the relationship with the USG continued to be of major importance.

Niger Delta Policy

¶5. (C) DAS Moss asked Kingibe to lay out the GON's current strategy for addressing the continuing disruption and insecurity in the Niger Delta; he stressed that the USG wants to play a supportive and constructive role there. Kingibe acknowledged that progress on the Delta was vital for President Yar'Adua's overall agenda, and that the GON had made less progress in tackling the issue than he and the President had hoped. When they laid out a strategy back in July in a meeting with elders from the region, they had expected results within three months; seven months later, they had little to show for it.

¶6. (C) According to Kingibe, the GON had just launched a new outreach effort aimed primarily at addressing the grievances of the Ijaw people in Delta and Bayelsa states, for which Vice President Goodluck Jonathan (himself an Ijaw) was acting as the point. This effort was to come up with a new strategy within the next few weeks to promote "inclusiveness and economic advancement" in the region. Kingibe added that, while it was also necessary to address security issues in order to make progress on other areas, the main focus would be on engagement and dialogue. (Comment: VP Jonathan was

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also at least the figurehead of the Yar'Adua administration's earlier unsuccessful effort to promote dialogue in the Delta, and did not impress in that role. End comment.)

¶7. (C) Turning to Rivers state, Kingibe characterized the security problems there as more a case of "pure criminality" than real grievance, and would require a tougher stance. He said the new Governor in the state (Rotimi Amaechi), who, like many politicians in the area, had previously had ties with some of the criminal gangs, now appeared seriously committed to taking the so-called "militants" on. Community leaders in the state, who had previously been cowed by the gangs, were now also starting to speak out against the continuing unrest.

¶8. (C) DAS Moss recalled that the USG had made previous offers to the GON of monitoring equipment, assistance with tracing militants' weapons, etc., which were intended to assist security efforts in the Delta, but these had generally not been taken up. He asked if the GON wanted such help, or did it prefer to take the issue of Delta security on without outside help. Kingibe acknowledged the GON's own ambiguity on this point. The government was "hesitant" to see the "creeping internationalization of an internal problem," to which there would likely be a negative domestic political reaction. That said, he added, his hesitation did not mean the GON was ruling out such help "for all time," but it would prefer to deal with the problem itself, and, he believed it could do so.

¶9. (C) DAS Moss noted that the problems of the Delta were not caused by a lack of resources. The state governments received very large allocations, but the funds did not produce results because of corruption, particularly by past Governors. He asked if we could help deal with this problem, for example by assisting with tracking where funds allocated to the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) actually went.

¶10. (C) Kingibe acknowledged the problems both with corruption in state governments and the allocation of NDDC funds to projects of questionable development value. He noted that the Delta states constantly demanded more of the national revenue, but were not able to give evidence of how previous funds had been spent. He said the federal government was trying to address both problems, both by pursuing governors responsible for corruption and by changing the way the NDDC funds were used. He said future NDDC projects would have to involve more than one state, so no individual state governor could control them.

The EFCC Issue

¶11. (C) DAS Moss said the decision to send EFCC Chairman Ribadu off on a one-year study course had played very badly in the U.S. and internationally. President Yar'Adua, during his visit to Washington, had impressed us with his commitment to reform in Nigeria, particularly in the area of corruption.

For him, so soon after his return, to have sidelined the person seen as the GON's point man on corruption brought many to question Yar'Adua's commitment. It was simply not credible to argue that the leader of the fight against one of Nigeria's biggest problems needed to be pulled out to go on a study course.

¶12. (C) Kingibe acknowledged that the issue had been mishandled (see also ref. A), and had hurt the government domestically as well as internationally. He insisted that, whatever the public perception, President Yar'Adua remained deeply committed to the fight against corruption, but Kingibe recognized that the onus was on the GON to show this was true. He asked the USG to make a distinction between supporting the EFCC as an institution and backing Ribadu as a person. He described Ribadu as something of a loose cannon; he was vigorous in pursuing corruption, but "vigor without caution" was not necessarily a good thing. Ribadu's very public disagreements with the Attorney General and others were not helpful or tenable over the long term, he argued.

The Pfizer Case

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¶13. (C) The Ambassador noted that, on President Yar'Adua's recommendation (see ref. B), she will be seeing Attorney General (AG) Aondoakaa shortly to discuss the court case in Kano against Pfizer Pharmaceuticals. We were trying to encourage dialogue between the parties to help find a settlement of the case. She asked if the AG was the right interlocutor, or were there others?

¶14. (C) Kingibe pointed out that the federal government was not the only, or even the main, player in the case; the Kano State Government was the principal party facing Pfizer. Still, the President had discussed the case with the state Governor, as had AG Aondoakaa with the Kano state AG, in both cases to urge a settlement. Kingibe thought Aondoakaa should remain the Ambassador's "go to" person on this case. He warned that there were some "ambulance chasers" involved in the case up in Kano whom we would do well to avoid. The Ambassador also added that she would keep him in the loop on the issue when needed, to which he not only added his concurrence, but also offered to assist when stumbling blocks arose.

Other Items

¶15. (C) Peacekeeping: DAS Moss thanked Kingibe for Nigeria's willingness to send peacekeepers to Somalia, and asked what the next step was on making this a reality. Kingibe deferred to the Minister of Defense (with whom Moss was meeting January 24, see septel) on this. He thought, however, that agreeing to an MOU with the African Union was the likely next step, especially in light of Nigeria's sometimes difficult experience in Darfur.

¶16. (SBU) Railway reconstruction: Kingibe asked if anyone at the Ministry of Transport had contacted us concerning the bid of U.S. firm Lemna Corporation to rebuild parts of Nigeria's rail network. EconCouns said we would be seeing the Minister of Transport on January 24, and expected to discuss it then. Kingibe said that, for him, the important thing was that someone did get back to us about the matter, which the Ambassador had raised with the President.

¶17. (C) BIT: Moss asked if the GON was proceeding to consider our proposal to negotiate a Bilateral Investment Treaty. Kingibe said the Presidency has already signed off on the principal of concluding such a deal. The actual negotiations were "someone else's department."

Comment

¶18. (C) Throughout the meeting, Kingibe was eager to underline the Presidency's and his own wish for open and close working ties with the USG. We will see if this positive discussion turns into concrete actions on the issues key to U.S. goals and objectives in Nigeria. End comment.

¶19. (U) This cable has been cleared by DAS Moss.
SANDERS